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FM AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6893
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RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 1426
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 1467
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN PRIORITY 1456
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 1407
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 1356
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 1422
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 1381
RUEHFIR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 1315
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 1226
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/Joint STAFF WASHDC
RHMFIISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RHMFIISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE
RHMFIISS/HQ USSOCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 1457
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE PRIORITY 1505
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 1007
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY 0800
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 8015

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 DUSHANBE 000443

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STATE FOR SCA/CEN, SCA/PPD, EUR/PPD, R, P, S/P, EUR
NSC FOR MLLARD, MERKEL

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PREL PROP EINV SNAR SOCI KPAO RS TI

SUBJECT: TAJIKISTAN: DISTORTED VIEWS FROM THE EDUCATED STREET

REF: DUSHANBE 0239

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¶1. SUMMARY: Distorted views of U.S. policy and goals originate, in large part, in the Russian mass media, which dominate Tajikistan's information space. Reputable and independent international broadcasts in Russian, perhaps from a CNN Russian Service, would help to alleviate this problem. END SUMMARY.

¶2. In December, Dushanbe newspapers published an attack on ABA/CEELI's law and rights program for high school students, alleging that it was part of a "color revolution" plot to undermine authority and turn students against their parents. The Ambassador responded with a letter to the editor setting the record straight. That letter prompted an op-ed from a local lawyer and occasional journalist, Dmitriy Juravlev, attacking U.S. foreign policy on democracy and on other issues. It was clear Juravlev was not recycling government talking points, but was making a reasonably good-faith effort to understand U.S. policy in a badly distorted information environment. In his reply to Juravlev, the Ambassador invited him to meet and discuss his ideas.

¶3. Juravlev and the Ambassador met March 2 for 90 minutes. In his early 30s, Juravlev was graduated from the Tajik Pedagogical University and the Russian Legal Academy in Moscow. He worked for two and a half years in the Tajik presidential apparatus covering human rights, disarmament, and foreign policy issues. He left when a new boss came in and is currently the assistant manager of the Tajik Nitrogen Plant in Yovon, Khatlon Oblast.

¶4. Juravlev is no dummy. We report his views as an example of what U.S. public diplomacy is up against on the reasonably well-educated street. His questions and views included the following:

-- Why is the United States really involved in a remote country like Tajikistan? What is your real motive?

-- Other countries like Russia and Iran are investing in Tajikistan. Why does the United States refuse to invest?

-- Didn't you invade Iraq and aren't you preparing to invade Iran so that you can control their oil and deny access to it by China and India so that their economies won't grow and threaten U.S. global dominance?

-- Your military has occupied Afghanistan for four years, but heroin production continues to burgeon. Aren't you really colluding with the Afghan government to poison Russia with heroin to weaken Moscow?

-- Why are you building the [Pyanzh River] bridge and promoting road-building and other infrastructure projects? Don't you really have military goals in mind?

¶5. The Ambassador responded candidly and at length to each question, explaining U.S. views and goals. At the end, Juravlev replied, "I know all that. I've read all your speeches and interviews," implying that a U.S. official's views are unreliable simply because they are official.

¶6. COMMENT: By Tajik standards, Juravlev is well-educated, well-spoken, and not ill-informed, considering the information to which he has access. In post-Soviet Tajikistan, people like him gain their understanding of the world largely from Russian broadcast and print media. Each of Juravlev's allegations has appeared in Russian media here. While we will add Juravlev to

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our distribution list and invite him to appropriate programs, there are thousands and thousands more Juravlevs that we can't reach in person. This would seem to argue for the kind of independent Russian-language broadcasting proposed reftel, "The CIS Needs a CNN Russian Language Service." END COMMENT.

HOAGLAND